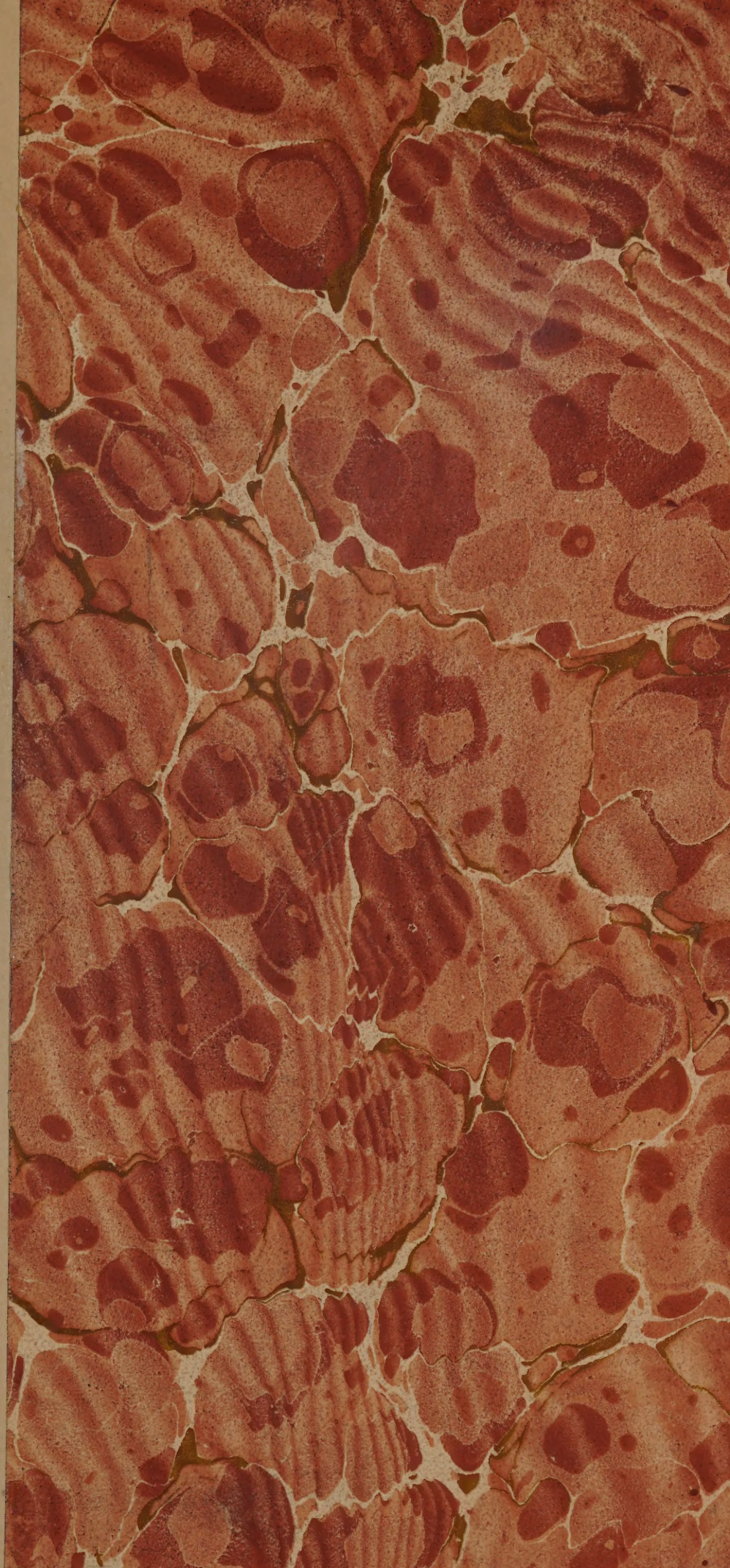
SHERIDAN'S ODE TO SCANDAL

R. CROMPTON RHODES



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AN ODE TO SCANDAL

BY RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

An ODE to SCANDAL

Together with

A PORTRAIT

By RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

Edited by R. CROMPTON RHODES

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TO SIR ISRAEL GOLLANCZ

Note

AN ODE TO SCANDAL.., 'by the late Right Hon. R. B. SHERIDAN,' was printed in 1819, and no earlier edition has hitherto been suspected. It is now reprinted for the first time from a fuller version, printed anonymously in 1781, by permission of Mr PERCIVAL F. HINTON, the owner of the only known copy.

'A Portrait... by R. B. SHERIDAN, Esq.,' was written in 1777. It appeared surreptitiously in print in 1810, but in what form is unknown: it was probably in some periodical. It is now reprinted from JOHN MURRAY'S edition of *The School for Scandal* (1821), where it appears as the Dedicatory Poem.

R·C·R

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The Neglect of Sheridan

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN is the most neglected of our great writers. Until Mr Walter Sichel's invaluable *Sheridan* (1906) there was no comprehensive or considered biography, and since that monograph the additions to our knowledge of the dramatist have been negligible. His letters have never been collected. His speeches have never been edited since 1842. His poems have never been collected. His plays have been better treated, but the standard *Oxford Edition* (1906) is incomplete and uncritical. Nor are these defects easy to remedy. The collections of Sheridan's printed books in the great libraries of the British Isles are, severally and collectively, inadequate. The British Museum owns the largest, but that would be still incomplete if it were augmented by the several unique copies in seven other leading libraries of Great Britain and Ireland. Many early unrecorded editions are in private hands. The 'collectors,' however, have a curious habit of disregarding all editions but those recognised (not always correctly) as 'the first.'

The School for Scandal offers a striking example. An undated edition bearing the name of 'J. Ewling, Dublin' is accepted as 'the first.' (Its current value is over £60.) The 'second ' edition, as recorded in Mr Walter Sichel's bibliography, is dated 1781. There were actually three editions, and not only one, printed in that year; to see copies of them all in the public libraries, it would be necessary to visit London, Cambridge, and Dublin. (Their current prices, however, are from two to three guineas each). Having collated, word by word, some thirty different early editions of *The School for Scandal* printed in London, Dublin and Paris I am prepared to demonstrate that the Ewling edition was

at least later than any of the three editions of 1781 which, directly or indirectly, it reprinted. In point of fact, there was no printer or bookseller named Ewling in Dublin at this period, so far as has been discovered in the extensive researches of the leading authority on Irish books of this period, Mr E. R. McC. Dix. There were, however, several Ewings in Dublin. Thomas Ewing published *The Works of Congreve* in 1773. It is my opinion that, being usually found bound with other plays of the period from 1785 to 1800, the Ewling edition was printed in London during that period (perhaps as late as 1799) with a fictitious imprint. This is conjecture, not capable of direct confirmation. The legend that the Ewling edition was the first was a guess of J. P. Anderson's in his pioneer bibliography of some thirty years ago; his deduction evidently being made from a page of 'errata' which it contains. These have been construed as 'author's corrections,' though the author never authorized, much less corrected, this or any other edition of *The School for Scandal*. Mr Anderson further dated the Ewling edition as '1777 (?)' merely because the comedy was acted in London in that year. Mr Sichel, accepting this edition as the first, attributed it to 1778, because it was not until that year it was acted in Dublin. This attribution was partly due to a sentence in Thomas Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, which described 'the Dublin edition' as correct, while dismissing the London editions, printed during the lifetime of Sheridan, as incorrect. There were numerous 'Dublin editions,' but there is no doubt as to which of them Moore meant; his own copy of it, annotated in consonance with his notes in the *Life*, is preserved in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy at Dublin, where, with the help of Mr W. J. Lawrence, I discovered it. The date of this edition is 1799. All the previous editions that I have

seen, and most of the later editions printed before 1821, whether printed in Dublin, London or Paris, repeat the text of the edition of 1781; and this text is corrupt and valueless! The three 'correct' early editions, each with minor variants, are the Dublin of 1799, John Murray's of 1821 and George Daniel's (a little paper-covered volume in Cumberland's *British Theatre*) of 1826. These were printed from different MSS. The case of *The School for Scandal* is only one of several instances. A survey of Sheridan's published editions is, therefore, a task of unsuspected magnitude.

The perplexities are, in a large measure, the result of Sheridan's conspicuous aversion to print. 'He expressly told his second wife,' says Mr Walter Sichel in his *Sheridan* 'that he had never sanctioned any versions of his works, except *The Critic*, *Pizarro* and his speeches on the East India Bills.' Sheridan's statement must be accepted with reservations, for, among other things, he certainly concurred in the issue of the first edition of *The Rivals*, for which he wrote a preface. Until *Pizarro* his two most popular plays were *The School for Scandal* and *The Duenna*, both of which were performed much more frequently than *The Rivals* or *The Critic*. Of *The School for Scandal* no authorized or correct edition was printed in London during his lifetime, and of *The Duenna* no correct edition was printed till 1794, when an issue was sanctioned by the owner of the copyright, Thomas Harris, of Covent Garden Theatre. Yet both plays were frequently printed; the public, to repeat the words of Heminge and Condell about certain early editions of Shakespeare's plays, were 'abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them.' It is true that Sheridan's reluctance to print his

most popular plays was dictated by a commercial motive. He was a theatrical manager, like David Garrick, Samuel Foote and George Colman, who all refused to allow the printing of the most popular plays in their theatrical repertory, whether they happened to be their own or those of other authors. According to common law, the theatrical manager retained the right of performance only so long as the play was unpublished; when once printed, it could be performed without leave or payment in any theatre. This brief explanation, which by no means exhausts the subject, may account for Sheridan's aversion to printing his plays after he became manager of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. But this aversion was not confined to his plays; it extended to his speeches and his poems. Apart from his pamphlet on the East India Bills, most of what purported to be his speeches were reports not taken verbatim, but made, not from shorthand, but from memory. Of his poems, there is no doubt that he sanctioned, at least passively, such pieces as were published according to the theatrical custom of the time—his various prologues and epilogues, his book of *The Songs in The Duenna*, and his *Verses to the Memory of Garrick*. Other fugitive poems were printed, after a lapse of many years, in the periodical publications of the time, while others have been recovered from his papers and other sources and printed in the biographies by Thomas Moore, Fraser Rae and Walter Sichel. Sheridan's poetry was, almost without exception, occasional verse or *vers de société*, and, after his youthful assiduities, he never once contemplated a 'collected edition' of his poetry, or, even in those days, more than an occasional pamphlet. A great deal of obscurity attends the verses that he wrote at Bath. *The European Magazine* for February, 1782 in an account of Sheridan said: 'At the age

of eighteen years he joined a friend in translating *The Epistles of Aristænetus* from the Greek, and about the same period printed several works, which are known only to his intimate friends, and some of them perhaps not to them.' Besides *The Epistles of Aristænetus*, in which his share is very uncertain, there is no doubt that he wrote *Clio's Protest* (1771) and *The Ridotto at Bath* (1772). If other 'works' of his were then printed, they are unknown to us; the only one named by *The European Magazine*, and that only as rumoured to be his, was 'An Answer to the celebrated *Heroic Epistles* of Sir William Chambers,' of which I know nothing. *An Ode to Scandal* is ascribed by Mr Walter Sichel to this period of Sheridan's career, about the summer of 1772. At this stage, in considering the poems attributed to Sheridan, one must, therefore, proceed with caution. One of the great dangers is the tyranny of title-pages.

Until Mr. Sichel's bibliography in his *Sheridan*, the only attempt at listing the editions of Sheridan's works was made by Mr John P. Anderson, as an appendix for the *Life of Sheridan* by Mr Lloyd Sanders. He compiled an accurate abstract of the title-pages of books in the British Museum. He gave the place of publication, ignored the names of publishers, and suggested rather lightly, dates where they were missing. But he seems to have conceived no general obligation to have opened the books he was listing. Accordingly his bibliography, though it might have been quite satisfactory for most ordinary purposes with any ordinary writer, novelist or poet, was utterly inadequate in the case of Sheridan. So it would have been in a lesser degree for any other dramatist of the period. With Sheridan it happens that the plays were often preceded in print by political or literary squibs printed under the same titles. In several cases, this is not clear from the title-pages, and

in such instances, his bibliography, as Mr Sichel pointed out, does not distinguish between the skits and the plays. Accordingly, he has recorded the first edition of *The Duenna* as being issued in 1775. What appeared in that year (or rather, as I believe with Mr Iolo A. Williams, in 1776) was a political skit with parodies of Sheridan's songs. Mr Sichel himself, in his own bibliography, gives the earliest edition of *The Duenna* as printed in Dublin in 1786. What appeared in that year is (apart from the songs, which are correctly printed) a very bad paraphrase of Sheridan's comic opera, most determinedly 'maimed and deformed.' The genuine text was not printed till 1794. Unfortunately, Mr Sichel sometimes seems to have supplemented his own very accurate and extensive bibliography from Anderson's without distinguishing the instances where he relied on his predecessor. On Mr Sichel's authority the misleading entries of Mr Anderson have, therefore, been perpetuated in the Sheridan bibliography in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* and elsewhere. Mr Iolo Williams is not, of course, just a title-page bibliographer; he is a charming and urbane critic of the books he describes. His more recent *Seven XVIIIth Century Bibliographies* is a model of description, although with Sheridan it is chiefly confined to the accepted first editions. But with so neglected and so inaccessible an author as Sheridan, bibliography is bound to be progressive. Especially is this so when it is coupled (as it must be) with an assessment of the authenticity of texts, and an examination of the genuineness of attributions.

Sheridan and Scandal

SCANDAL was a theme which never ceased to interest Sheridan. It was the inspiration of *The School for Scandal* and its two poetical off-shoots, *A Portrait* and (if indeed it be his) *An Ode to Scandal*. There is no reason for thinking that his theme was dictated by personal resentment. What happened to Sheridan after 1781, when these pieces were all written, and he became a politician, has clearly nothing to do with the case, and it is well to remove it from our minds. Until that time at least no man had ever been favoured more highly by fortune or suffered less from detraction. For the motive of this play and these poems one must look, not into the secrets of Sheridan's life, but into the world about him. Indeed, whoever wishes to understand them as they were understood in their own time can find no better key than the contemporary volumes of *The Town and Country Magazine*, or the contemporary files of *The Morning Post*.

Scandal was indeed the vice of the age. In Sheridan's time, gossip about public people may have been no more virulent than it is in our time, but it turned slander into libel with engaging equanimity. The periodicals which were (according to our standards) the more respectable, frequently printed, in ponderous verse or prose of devastating dulness, diatribes against Scandal. The less reputable periodicals printed the scandal. In our time *The Town and Country Magazine* would be involved in half-a-dozen libel actions a month. Its chief feature was the monthly Tête-à-tête, which exposed the career of some prominent man and his latest mistress, or some prominent woman and her latest lover. Though full names were not printed, the initials and soubriquets were ample; there was no doubt that 'The

Memoirs of Le Comte de Lunettes and Miss D——n' concerned the Earl of Peterborough (who, according to gossip, wore his spectacles even in bed) and a pretty young woman named Dawson. In some cases, until they appeared as a pair of portraits in its pages, 'the parties' in these Têtes-à-Têtes, as Sheridan said in *The School for Scandal*, 'had perhaps never seen each others' faces before in the course of their lives.' To this playful sally the editor of *The Town and Country Magazine* retorted that, while thanking Sheridan for 'the honour of his particular attention,' which would 'immortalize the author of this department,' the dramatist had only to make use of his own recollections to verify the truth of his Tête-à-Tête of 'the Amorous Justice and Mrs L——n.' Who the magistrate was I cannot identify, but the lady was Mrs Lessingham the actress, and the account of her other amours is amply confirmed from other sources. Four months before *The School for Scandal* was produced, the first Lady Teazle, Mrs Abington, had figured in a Tête-à-Tête under the name of Thalia, 'the wife of Mr A——n, a musician.' The story of most of her intrigues, perhaps all, there narrated is substantiated by other accounts.

Whether this attack on Mrs Abington provoked Sheridan's sally there is no means of knowing. But in the comedy the nomenclature of such people as 'Colonel Cassino and Mrs Festino' is exactly in the style of the magazine. So are the pieces of scandal: Mrs Clackitt, whose 'industry had caused several Têtes-à-Têtes,' hinted that 'a certain widow in the next street had got rid of the dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner.' This is an echo of a Tête-à-Tête in *The Town and Country Magazine* for June 1772, in which a certain widow, (who figured with 'The Minden Hero,' Lord George Germaine) 'recovered from

her dropsical complaint' some twelve months after her husband's death, but 'how far she will be able to recover her reputation remains to be discovered.' These instancescould be multiplied with no difficulty. By an industrious reading of contemporary periodicals, one might recover, in the best style of Shakespearean editors, 'parallel passages' for every scrap of scandal in the comedy. There is something of the same spirit, but indignantly expressed in *An Ode to Scandal*, which, as printed in 1781, showed the fate of two innocent victims of calumny—a girl accused of incontinence and a soldier accused of cowardice. *A Portrait* is a gracious artificiality, a pæan of rejoicing that in a day when so many innocent persons were suffering from calumny, at least one was beyond the scope of censure. Both poems are best understood if they are placed against a background of the Georgian era as reflected in *The Town and Country Magazine* and *The Morning Post*.

It is one of the ironies of fate that to Sheridan has been generally attributed another Ode which would convict him of being a scandalmonger. This poem is *The General Fast*, a Lyric Ode with a Form of Prayer proper to the occasion And a dedication to the King. By the author of *The Duenna* (1776). Without entering into the full circumstances, it must be denied that the author of *The School for Scandal* could ever have written this stanza:

> Shall Rigby, or shall Weymouth, drunk,
> Shall ev'ry knave and ev'ry punk,
> Whom kings may hoist to pow'r
> Decree the empire of the seas?
> Shall we submit to things like these,
> Nor curse the tainted hour?

Nor, though he was so vehemently to attack the Earl of

Sandwich as 'a man born for the destruction of the British Navy,' could he have written:

> Sandwich, the curse of this fair isle,
> With Ray shall laugh, and joke, and smile,
> And tremble at her nod.

For 'Ray' was Sandwich's mistress, whose amours had been exposed in the Tête-à-Tête for November, 1789, under the names of 'Jemmy Twitcher and Miss R——y.' The final proof, however, lies in the fact that 'the author of *The Duenna*' so described on this title-page was not Sheridan, but the political pamphleteer who wrote the political skit that was published under the title of *The Duenna* (1776),[1] and a similar travesty published under the title of *The Critic* (1780). Sheridan must, therefore, be acquitted from the charge of being the scandalmonger who wrote *The General Fast*.

Sheridan looked upon scandal as a comic dramatist; there was no personal indignation, and, for that matter, little social indignation, in his comedy. So far as may be judged he had, before 1777, no reason for complaint. There was, of course, the romantic affair of the duel with Matthews at Bath, about which not a little is still obscure. Of this Moore in his *Life* tells a curious story, which there is no reason to doubt. 'A statement of his conduct in the duels, having appeared in one of the Bath papers, so false and calumnious as to require an immediate answer, he called upon Woodfall to request that his paper might be the medium of it. But wishing, he said, that the public should have the whole matter fairly before them, he thought it right that the offensive statement should first be inserted,

[1] This contains a scurrilous scene between 'Jemmy Twitcher' and 'Miss Clara Raymond.'

and in a day or two after be followed by his answer, which would thus come with more relevancy and effect. In compliance with his wish, Woodfall lost not a moment in transcribing the calumnious article into his columns—not doubting, of course, that the refutation of it would be furnished with still greater eagerness. Day after day, however, elapsed, and, notwithstanding frequent applications on the one side, and promises on the other, not a line of the answer was ever sent by Sheridan—who, having expended all his activity in the circulation of the poison, had no industry left to apply the antidote.' This story has been dismissed as scandal. In Green's *Linley, Sheridan and Mathews at Bath*, it is shown that no such article was printed in Henry Sampson Woodfall's *Public Advertiser*. But the Woodfall of theatrical circles was his younger brother, William Woodfall, who was then 'printer' or editor of *The London Packet*, as soon afterwards of *The Morning Chronicle* to which Sheridan was a political contributor. He was one of Sheridan's friends; in February 1777, for his alteration of Savage's *Sir Thomas Overbury* at Drury Lane, Sheridan, who was by no means prolific in such favours, wrote a prologue. It is, therefore, first to *The London Packet* that attention should be directed. It would be an ironical circumstance if we were to discover (though no such definite proof is likely) that instead of consuming his ardours in refuting this calumny, Sheridan was devoting them to the more altruistic composition of *An Ode to the Genius of Scandal.*

And outside this affair of the duel Sheridan had not been calumniated. And, going for a moment beyond the relevant period, whatever may be discovered as to reflections upon his political reputation, as a dramatist he was recognised for the genius that he was. Before *The School for*

Scandal no comedy had ever enjoyed, during its authors' lifetime, so great a measure of success. No dramatist had ever, for a single play, received so much money, perhaps not a quarter of it. At its first appearance *The Town and Country Magazine*, nothing resentful, said roundly, 'This excellent comedy is certainly the best which has appeared on our stage since the time of Congreve and Vanbrugh.' The contemporary appraisement of all his plays was so just that when the time comes for a new systematic examination of them there is little doubt their judgment will be confirmed. If *The European Magazine* could dismiss his *Robinson Crusoe* as 'inferior to the worst performance of Mr Messink, and a proof that the greatest genius will sink beneath contempt when he contends with a mechanic in his own profession,' the verdict seems to have been just. Even as to *Pizarro* with its topical applications, its scenic splendour, there were no illusions.

As for his personal reputation, even envy seems then to have found no voice in disparagement of his success. Within three years of his duel at Bath this young man had become 'the author of *The Duenna*,' the husband of one of the most beautiful and celebrated women of the time, and the friend of the greatest ladies of the land. The day was distant when one Watkins, writing the *Memoirs* after Sheridan's death, solemnly recorded a stupid and egregious calumny that it was not Sheridan who wrote *The School for Scandal*, but 'a young lady in Thames Street,' from whom the dramatist stole it. The Genius of Scandal must have been prostrate with laughter.

A Portrait

A PORTRAIT is a poem which Sheridan, as he told his second wife, sent 'with a finely bound MS. copy of *The School for Scandal*' to the lady whose virtues he celebrates under the name of Amoret. *A Portrait* was being circulated in MS. in less than four months, at least, after the first performance of *The School for Scandal*. The comedy was acted on May 8, 1777; on August 3 of the same year Lord Camden wrote to David Garrick, 'By some accident you forgot to show us Sheridan's verse when you were here. Would it be too much to beg a copy? 'In Boaden's *Private Correspondence of David Garrick*, another letter of August 11 from Lord Camden tells Garrick, 'I have returned the verses you were so good to lend me, and, considering they are mere panegyric (the most insipid species of poetry) they are extremely good. The girls have taken a copy, perhaps without leave, but if you think Mr Sheridan may be displeased with this liberty, it shall be burnt . . . . Charles Fox dined here yesterday; he admires Sheridan's verses, and agrees with me in marking him as the first genius of these times.'

Horace Walpole, who heard them repeated about the same time, hoped they would 'not long retain their MS. -hood.' Boaden notes that these verses were *A Portrait*, adding they 'have a heavy elaborate ingenuity about them without warmth.' Mr Walter Sichel, however, pronounces them the best dedicatory poem in our language. In the beginning the poet summons the Daughters of Calumny:

> Tell me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
> Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,
> Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
> So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own,

That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise?
Attend!—a model shall attract your view—
Daughters of Calumny, I summon you!

The model he bids before them is 'the gentle Amoret.'

Adorning Fashion, unadorn'd by dress,
Simple from taste, and not from carelessness;
Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,
No state has Amoret! no studied mien;
She frowns no goddess, and she moves no queen.

(The last couplet is a parody of one in Pope's *Homer* in praise of Helen; it had perhaps no more recondite source than a quotation in Burke's Essay on *The Sublime and Beautiful.*)

The true name of Amoret, by a conceit so agreeable to the artificial style of the poem, is not revealed until, after a dramatic pause, the very last word of the last line. This conceit is always destroyed in the printed copies of the poem, where her name is always printed beneath the title. As the poem was not printed for more than thirty years after it was written (and then not with Sheridan's sanction) I have dared, by slightly altering the sub-title, to restore the artifice upon which the climax depends. This seems all the more necessary as the last line has always been misinterpreted. It has been often said, and even by Mr Sichel, that the last line acknowledges and celebrates her as the inspirer of *The School for Scandal.* This cannot be sustained The poem invokes first, the Daughters of Calumny, second the Muse of Poetry, and third, the gentle Amoret. After the Muse has chanted the praise of Amoret, the Daughters of Calumny are silent:

And lo! each pallid hag, with blister'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung—
Owns all the colours just—the outline true;
Thee my inspirer, and my model—CREWE!

There is no reference at all in the whole poem to *The School for Scandal*: it is not that comedy which has 'cast a gloom o'er Scandal's reign,' but the Portrait of Amoret. The Daughters of Calumny admit that his poem has been inspired by the Muse, and that the model who sat for the Portrait is the beautiful, witty, intellectual Frances Crewe. 'The gentle Amoret,' the only daughter of Fulke Greville, had married John Crewe in 1775. Years afterwards, when Sheridan had forgotten these verses, their surreptitious appearance in print, probably in some periodical, reminded him that Nature had made him (as he told his second wife) 'an ardent, romantic blockhead.' In later years Mrs Crewe's indiscretions were notorious. To her beauty there are many tributes besides the three portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds. In her Diary in 1799, after her first meeting with the Sheridans, Fanny Burney wrote that 'the elegance of Mrs Sheridan's beauty is unequalled by any that I ever saw, except Mrs Crewe's.' It was a day of beautiful women, but Amoret was, as Sheridan wrote of her in his old age, 'the handsomest of the set.'

Mr Sichell says that 'whether these verses were as welcome to the first Mrs Sheridan as to their recipient may be questioned, but *Pierrot*, we may be sure, could eventually explain them to her satisfaction.' He had clearly no reason to explain why he considered her as his inspirer of *The School for Scandal*, for the poem said nothing of the sort. Moreover, 'Pierrot' was echoing a poem of his wife's in *A Portrait*. It was (as nobody seems to have noticed) Mrs

Sheridan who gave the name of Amoret to Mrs Crewe in her poem *Laura to Silvio*. For the ultimate origin of *A Portrait* we must turn to the famous ball, given by Mrs Crewe in 1775, of which Sheridan had sent to his wife a glowing description, praising the celebrated beauties who were there. In return she sent him this poem, *Laura to Silvio*, in which he is depicted as a young poet, undecided among so many beauties which of them he shall sing. Shall it be 'majestic Stella'? the Marchioness of Granby, or 'Myra '? the Duchess of Devonshire? Or 'sweet Jessie,' the Countess of Jersey. Or 'the playful Flavia,' the Countess of Craven, afterwards Margravine of Anspach. Or shall it be 'the gentle Amoret'?

Laura pictures her thus:

> With gentle step and hesitating grace,
> Unconscious of her power, the fair one came;
> If while he view'd the glories of her face
> Poor Silvio doubted—who shall dare to blame?

In the couplet of Sheridan

> Come, gentle Amoret (for 'neath that name,
> In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame);

the 'worthier verse' is the poem, *Laura to Silvio*.

A portrait has indeed other unnoticed allusions to Mrs Sheridan's poem. For instance:

> On Granby's cheek might bid new glories rise,
> Or point a purer beam from Devon's eyes!

is an echo of her:

On Myra's breast the opening rose shall blow,
Reflecting from her cheek a livelier bloom;
For Stella shall the bright carnation glow,
Beneath her eye's bright radiance meet its doom.

Laura to Silvio was, in effect, a plea to Sheridan to write about his own wife, not somebody else's. *A Portrait* was the result. The deftness of his allusions to the two great ladies, to Sir Joshua, to the 'all-accomplished Mrs Greville,' the mother of Mrs Crewe, and to Mrs Millar, the Sappho of the Garden of Bath-Easton, and to his own wife, are typical of the courtly, propitiatory manner of Sheridan. *Pierrot* could have explained, no doubt, but he did better—he anticipated.

A Portrait

FOR AMORET: WITH A COPY OF

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

TELL me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,

Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own,

That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise!—

Attend!—a model shall attract your view—
Daughters of Calumny, I summon you!

You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.—

Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,

Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare
A fix'd antipathy to young and fair;

By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,
In maiden madness, virulently bold!—

Attend! ye skilled to coin the precious tale,
Creating proof, where innuendoes fail!

Whose practised memories, cruelly exact.
Omit no circumstance, except the fact!—

Attend, all ye who boast,—or old or young,—
The living libel of a slanderous tongue!

So shall my theme as far contrasted be,
As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny.

Come, gentle Amoret (for 'neath that name,
In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame);

Come—for but thee who seeks the Muse? and while
Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,

With timid grace, and hesitating eye,
The perfect model, which I boast, supply:—

Vain Muse! couldst thou the humblest sketch create
Of her, or slightest charm couldst imitate—

Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace
The faintest wonder of her form and face—

Poets would study the immortal line,
And Reynolds own his art subdued by thine;

That art, which well might added lustre give
To Nature's best, and Heaven's superlative:

On Granby's cheek might bid new glories rise,
Or point a purer beam from Devon's eyes!

Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays!

But praising Amoret we cannot err,
No tongue o'ervalues Heaven, or flatters her!

Yet she by Fate's perverseness—she alone
Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her own!

Adorning Fashion, unadorn'd by dress,
Simple from taste, and not from carelessness;

Discreet in geſture, in deportment mild
Not ſtiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild:

No ſtate has Amoret! no ſtudied mien;
She frowns no goddess, and she moves no queen.

The softer charm that in her manner lies
Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise;

It juſtly suits th' expression of her face,—
'Tis less than dignity, and more than grace!

On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
That form'd by Heav'n to be admired so much,

The hand divine, with a less partial care,
Might well have fixed a fainter crimson there,

And bade the gentle inmate of her breaſt,—
Inshrined Modeſty!—supply the reſt.

But who the perils of her lips shall paint?
Strip them of smiles—ſtill, ſtill all words are faint!

But moving Love himself appears to teach
Their action, though denied to rule her speech;

And thou who seeſt her speak and doſt not hear,
Mourn not her diſtant accents 'scape thine ear;

Viewing those lips, thou ſtill may'ſt make pretence
To judge of what she says, and swear 'tis sense:

Cloth'd with such grace, with such expression fraught,
They move in meaning, and they pause in thought!

But doſt thou farther watch, with charm'd surprise,
The mild irresolution of her eyes,

Curious to mark how frequent they repose,
In brief eclipse and momentary close—

Ah! seest thou not an ambush'd Cupid there,
Too tim'rous of his charge, with jealous care

Veils and unveils those beams of heav'nly light,
Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight?

Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.

What though her peaceful breast should ne'er allow
Subduing frowns to arm her alter'd brow,

By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,
More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!

Thus lovely, thus adorn'd, possessing all
Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,

The height of vanity might well be thought
Prerogative in her, and Nature's fault.

Yet gentle Amoret, in mind supreme
As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme;

And half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
She barbs with wit those darts too keen before:—

Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though Greville, or the Muse, should deign to teach,

Fond to improve, nor tim'rous to discern
How far it is a woman's grace to learn;

In Millar's dialect she would not prove
Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love,

Graced by those signs, which truth delight to own,
The timid blush, and mild submitted tone:

Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
Displays the tender hue of female doubt;

Deck'd with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
How graceful science, when that robe she wears!

Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined,

A taſte for mirth, by contemplation school'd,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,

A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide;
An awe for talent, which she owns with pride!

Peace! idle Muse,—no more thy ſtrain prolong,
But yield a theme, thy warmeſt praises wrong;

Juſt to her merit, though thou canſt not raise
Thy feeble verse, behold th' acknowledged praise

Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And caſt a fatal gloom o'er Scandal's reign!

And lo! each pallid hag, with bliſter'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung—

Owns all the colours juſt; the outline true;
Thee my inspirer; and my model—CREWE!

An Ode to Scandal

AN ODE TO SCANDAL presents a difficult and complicated problem. Mr Lloyd Sanders, in his *Life of Sheridan*, says that, while the *Ode* is as good as any verse Sheridan ever wrote, 'its genuineness appears to be quite an open question.' Mr Walter Sichel, whose knowledge of Sheridan is unsurpassed, has, after scrutiny, rejected the arguments suggested by Mr Sanders, and has no doubt that it was an early poem of Sheridan's. Mr Iolo A. Williams, who has an exceptional knowledge of the poetry of this period, agrees in *Seven XVIIIth Century Bibliographies* that 'it appears to be a genuine production of Sheridan's.' None of them, however, knew that the poem had been published, nearly forty years before Wright's edition, in a fuller form, anonymously, and without the author's consent. When it was published in 1781 by Kearsly, the title was *An Ode to the Genius of Scandal*; it is more convenient to retain the customary shorter title. The preface to Kearsly's edition is not very informative. It mentions that the author had previously printed only the requisite number of copies for the amusement of his private friends; it praises 'the spirit and elegance of the composition,' but there is no hint as to who the author was, and nothing that can be construed as an allusion to Sheridan. Again, it is quite certain that Sheridan was not in the mind of the reviewer who criticised *An Ode to the Genius of Scandal* in *The Monthly Review* (1782). He said that 'this rhapsodical performance is not without its merit, though perhaps not delivered by the hand of a master, is yet sketched with a lively pencil . . . The dramatisation is given its form by the introduction of a young lady driven to distraction by the artifices of calumny, and of a veteran soldier, by

the same base arts rendered miserable and undone.' Having quoted with approval certain passages, he made fun of one of its weaknesses—the couplet where the ancient warrior recollected:

> How once knee-deep he ſtood
> Inmoveably in blood.

The reviewer said playfully that no doubt the old gentleman's mind was so bewildered that his memory deceived him.

THE FORM.

THE moſt significant word in this review is 'dramatisation.' The poetical machinery of the *Ode* has a ſtriking similarity to that of *A Portrait*; as exemplified by the invocation of the Genius of Scandal, the coming of the daughters of calumny, and the summoning of the two victims, the weeping maiden and the old soldier. Of course, there are differences. The form of *An Ode to Scandal* is more highly developed than that of *A Portrait*. The few who have considered *An Ode to Scandal* have missed an important point concerning its form. The invocation to the Genius is a Miltonic echo:

> Haſte thee, then, and with thee bring
> Many a little venom'd ſting:
> Many a tale that no one knows
> Of ſhall-be-nameleſs belles and beaux:
> Juſt-imported curtain lectures,
> Winks and nods and ſhrewd conjectures:
> Half-a-dozen ſtrange ſuſpicions;
> Built on ſtranger ſuppoſitions;
> Unknown marriages ſome twenty,
> Private child-bed linen plenty . . .

And looking at the poem in Kearsly's edition of 1781, as

one accustomed to the play-books of the period, it is apparent that, without being a parody, its form is derived from *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso*—not Milton's twin-poems, but Handel's arrangement of them for music. The stanzaic divisions, the frequent variations in metre, and the tone of the *Ode*, all support this. In such a form *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso* was often performed at Drury Lane andCovent Garden, and copies sold in the playhouses. One version of this, of later date, had the title '*L'Allegro ed il Pensieroso*, written by Milton and set to music by Handel . . . as performed at Covent Garden Theatre 1791.' There were earlier editions of similar appearance. This was in the phrase that *The Monthly Review* of 1782 applied to the *Ode*, a 'dramatisation'of Milton's poem. With a slight change, the *Ode* might easily have been sung by distributed voices. There can be no doubt as to Sheridan's familiarity with *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso*; it was often performed at music meetings in the theatres of town and country. It must have been in the repertory of his wife, Elizabeth Linley, as a singer. It must be remembered that the greater part of Sheridan's verse was of theatrical origin or inspiration.

THE MORNING POST.

WHILE *An Ode to Scandal* makes no mention of *The Town and Country Magazine*, it alludes to the fashionable newspaper of the day, *The Morning Post*, founded in 1772. The *Ode* vowed to the Genius of Scandal that:

> Intrigues by the score,
> Never heard of before
> Shall the sacrifice daily augment
> And by each *Morning Post*
> Some favourite toast
> A victim to thee shall be sent.

Afterwards, but not in direct continuation, follows a passage in the alphabetical style then affected by the writers of society scandal in the newspaper (those whom Sir Peter Teazle knew would be writing about 'Mr S., Lady T. and Sir P.'):

> Lord! who'd have thought our cousin D.
> Could think of marrying Mrs E.!
> True, I don't like these things to tell,
> But, faith, I pity Mr L.,
> And was I he, the bride to vex
> I'd go and court my Lady X.
> Indeed they say that Charlotte U.
> With Fanny M., and we guess who,
> Occasion'd all—for you must know
> They set their caps at Mr. O.,
> And as he courted Mrs. E.,
> They thought if she'd have cousin D.,
> That things might be, through Captain A.,
> Just brought about in their own way.

If one were to assume that in 1819, when Wright printed his edition, somebody had merely guessed the *Ode* to be Sheridan's, this is the only passage that might have given rise to the conjecture. Wright claimed that *The School for Scandal* was founded on the *Ode*; if so, no other passage could be regarded as the germ of the printed play.

Mr Sichel compares this passage to a fragment of *The Slanderers*, the earliest surviving draft of any part of *The School for Scandal*. As printed in Moore's *Life*, the fragment reads:

THE SLANDERERS

A Pump Room Scene

Friendly caution to the newspapers.
It is whispered—
She is a constant attendant at church, and very frequently takes Dr M'Brawn home with her.
Mr Worthy is very good to the girl—for my part, I dare swear he has no ill intention.
What! Major Wesley's Miss Montague?
Lud, ma'am, the match is certainly broke—no creature knows the cause—some say a flaw in the gentleman's character, and others, in the gentleman's fortune.
To be sure, they do say—
I hate to repeat what I hear—
She was inclined to be a little plump before she went.
She had twins—How ill-natured! as I hope to be saved, ma'am, she had but one, and that a little starved brat not worth mentioning.

It may at once be admitted that the resemblance between *The Slanderers* and *An Ode to Scandal* is only the generic similarity of gossip to gossip. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to show a closer relation between *The Slanderers* and *The School for Scandal*. *The Slanderers* might have developed as reasonably into one as into the other, or into both as into either.

It may be here added that the only other parallel that Mr Sichel cites between the *Ode* and *The School for Scandal* is between 'Divine Cleora rather squints' and a passage, afterwards cancelled, when Maria's looks are discussed.

JOSEPH. Surely she has fine eyes.
LADY TEAZLE. Why so she has—though sometimes one fancies there is a little sort of squint.
JOSEPH. Squint! O fie, Lady Teazle—there *is* a little left-hand Cupid in one of her eyes.

But the passage about *The Morning Post* does recall certain little scraps of dialogue from Sheridan's never-to-be-finished comedy, *Affectation*, often announced as to be played about 1781. From the draft of this Moore in his *Life* recovered and printed these snatches of talk:

MAN (*intriguing only for the reputation of it; to his confidential servant*). Who am I in love with now?
SERVANT. The newspapers give you so-and-so. You are laying close siege to Lady L. in *The Morning Post*, and have succeeded with Lady S. in *The Herald*. Sir F. is very jealous of you in *The Gazetteer*.
MAN. Remember, to-morrow, the first thing you do, put me in love with Mrs. C.

And again, a note about a character:

An old man, who affects (i.e., pretends to) intrigue, writes his own reproaches in *The Morning Post* trying to scandalize himself into the reputation of being young, as if he could obscure his age by blotting his character, though never so little candid as when abusing himself.

These passages might be augmented from Mr Puff's discourse in *The Critic*, but in the end they would prove no more than that Sheridan's interest in scandal was not exhausted by *The School for Scandal* and *A Portrait*.

A REVIEW OF 1819.

THE reviews of 1819 were by no means positive as to Sheridan's authorship of *An Ode to Scandal*. One will suffice. Its source is *The Monthly Review* for February, 1819.—'We are not informed by what authority the publisher is justified in attributing these productions to Mr Sheridan, and the manner in which he introduces them is rather equivocal. If they did proceed from his pen, they were probably the production of an early period of his life before his wit had attained its final polish. Yet though they are unequal to the lines on Miss Linley, and to the prologue to *The Rivals*, and though they have not the neatness and elegance even of *The Songs of the Duenna*, they still have considerable merit.'

THE QUESTION OF ITS GENUINENESS.

MR LLOYD SANDERS, when describing the genuineness of *An Ode to Scandal* as 'quite an open question,' set out several objections against its authenticity, several of which were answered very ably by Mr Walter Sichel. But with the discovery of Kearsly's edition of 1781, other objections may reasonably arise, and must be considered, as his must now be reconsidered.

First, Its Anonymity. Kearsly's edition of *An Ode to Scandal* was anonymous. This is not a valid objection; for so also were the early piracies of *The School for Scandal* and the authorized issues of *The Songs in the Duenna*.

Secondly, Its Unauthorized Issue. Kearsly's edition was avowedly issued without the sanction of the author. This, again, is invalid. Sheridan's aversion to publication is fully established; like his own Sir Benjamin Backbite, he seems to have considered it 'vulgar to print.'

Thirdly, Its Previous Publication by Kearsly. As Wright issued his edition of 1819 from the same address as Kearsly issued his edition of 1781, he must have known of its existence. Wright's edition was clearly printed from an independent manuscript; if he had possessed a copy of Kearsly's edition, he would have avoided errors like 'by co-malicious laughter' for 'big with malicious laughter.' The omission of the entire episode about 'the warrior' argues, too, that he had no knowledge of the earlier edition.

Fourthly, The Metre. The metre, said Mr Sanders, was far more elaborate than Sheridan was accustomed to use. This objection is answered by Mr Sichel, who gives several instances of Sheridan's use of varying metres, as in the early lyric 'Near Avon's ridgy bank,' where there are no less than six changes. They need no further explanation. It would be no argument to insist upon the sustained metre of *A Portrait*, for the diverse metrical systems in *The Songs of the Duenna*, shows the variety which Sheridan could encompass. Certainly, however, the variations were imposed by the Miltonic, or rather Handelian, form.

Fifthly, Its Relation to the School for Scandal. Wright's edition claimed that *The School for Scandal* was founded on the *Ode*. Mr Sanders dismisses this as an 'impudent suggestion,' remarking quite truly that the poem 'does not contain a single anticipation of that play.' But although it disposes of this claim, which would never have been made by any person who had seen or read the play, it by no means disposes of the question of Sheridan's authorship. It is fortunate that Wright did not print the letter which accompanied the manuscript; it may, or of course may not have thrown a light on the subject, despite Mr Sanders' reasonable argument that, as Wright did not print the letter, it 'evidently had nothing to do with the *Ode*.' Mr Sichel, although he finds a similarity between the *Ode* and

an early discarded draft of *The School for Scandal*, discovers no resemblance between the poem and the comedy. He also compares it to an early poem of Sheridan's called *Poor Lucy*. This, however, merely shows that Sheridan had some command of pathos.

THE DATE.

MR. SICHEL ascribes the composition of *An Ode to Scandal* to 1772, during the period of convalescence after his duel with Matthews. I have suggested that he wrote it when he was promising to reply to the calumnies he had circulated in Woodfall's paper. Both suggestions have no support in fact, except that, if the *Ode* is Sheridan's, it must have been an early poem. Kearsly's preface of 1781 states that it had been previously printed for private circulation. It may, therefore, have been one of the lost books mentioned in the account of Sheridan in *The European Magazine*. But there are only two positive facts about the date—it could not have been finished earlier than 1772, when *The Morning Post* was founded, nor later than 1781, when Kearsly printed it. The rest is guessing.

CONCLUSION.

THE arguments in favour of its genuineness are (1) the posthumous ascription; (2) Sheridan's interest in the theme; (3) the poetical machinery of the form; (4) its semi-dramatic quality; (5) the presumption of early unknown works; (6) the invalidity of objections previously offered against it. These arguments are by no means formidable, and, at last, it would turn chiefly upon an incalculable factor, which is the credibility—and credulity—of Wright, the publisher of 1819. Nevertheless, in my opinion, *An*

Ode to Scandal must remain on the roll of Sheridan's accepted pieces, although many critics will agree with Mr Lloyd Sanders that its authorship remains 'an open question.' But until every play and every poem accepted as Sheridan's has been printed in the most authentic text that can be attained, it is premature to be any more definite. It is a melancholy reflection that so little study has been devoted to one of our greatest writers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY *of an* ODE *to* SCANDAL

KEARSLY'S EDITION, 1781.

An Ode to the Genius of Scandal . . . London: Printed for G. Kearsly. . . . M.DCC.LXXXI. Quarto.

Pagination. P. [1] half-title. An Ode to the Genius of Scandal. Price One Shilling; p. [2] blank; p. [3] title-page. An Ode to the Genius of Scandal. Qui Capit, Facit. I say Nothing! London. Printed for G. KEARSLY, at No. 46, Fleet Street, M.DCC.LXXXI; p. [4] blank.

Inserted Leaf. No pagination: recto. Preface dated Cambridge Oct. 30, 1781. Verso blank.

pp. [5], 6-18 Text; pp. [19-20] blank.

No running-title.

Collated from Mr Percival F. Hinton's copy.

WRIGHT'S EDITIONS

An Ode to Scandal; to which are added stanzas on Fire, by the late Right Hon. R. B. Sheridan.

The comedy of the School for Scandal was founded on the above Ode. London. Printed for W. Wright, 46, Fleet Street, 1819.

Copy in the Forster Collection. (See Williams, *Seven XVIIIth Century Bibliographies*.)

Notes. This edition omits the entire episode of the 'crested warrior' (44 lines), and two other stanzas. In this form it is reprinted in Sichel's Sheridan, vol. 1, 618-622. It includes the *Stanzas on Fire*, addressed, according to Wright, to 'the Ladies Eliza and Maria Birmingham, daughters of the Earl of Louth.' Mr Sichel thinks, however, that the Eliza and Mary of this jeu-d' esprit were Eliza and Mary Linley.

An Ode to Scandal; to which are added, Stanzas on Fire. Second Edition, London: Printed for W. Wright, 46 Fleet Street, 1819.

Copy in the British Museum.

[PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1781]

THE Author of the following ODE, intending it solely for the amusement of his intimate acquaintance, printed only the requisite number of copies. One who has long been happy in his friendship, and who was favoured with the poem, thought a more enlarged publication might prove beneficial to mankind, in correcting an evil of which every one complains. With this view he offers it to the world, and he hopes the intention will justify the act.

If those who, with a taste for satire, possess the powers of ridicule, are, by the perusal, awakened to a sense of the unhappiness the indiscriminate exercise of that dangerous talent may possibly occasion to innocence and worth; and if the tranquility of an individual is preserved, the writer's wishes will be gratified.

To the Author no suitable excuse can be offered—but the motive. This, if his delicacy rejects, his heart must approve. To the Public no apology will be thought necessary; the spirit and elegance of the composition, the philanthropy it breathes, must recommend it to encomium, and secure to it the applause it so justly merits.

Cambridge, Oct. 30, 1781.

AN

ODE TO SCANDAL;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

Stanzas on Fire.

BY THE LATE

RIGHT HON. R. B. SHERIDAN.

The Comedy of the School for Scandal was founded on the above Ode.

Second Edition.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR W. WRIGHT, 46, FLEET STREET.

1819.

[Title-page of the Edition of 1819]

TO THE PUBLIC.

WHAT motive the individual who inclosed the following ODE and STANZAS for Publication, could have had, in not inscribing his name, the Publisher is at a loss to guess; but from the quarter whence they came, he can vouch for their authenticity. He is anxious, however, to express his best thanks for the use of Mr. Sheridan's letter, from which the autographs have been engraved.

Fleet Street.

AN
ODE

OH! thou, whose all-consoling pow'r
Can soothe our cares to rest;
Whose touch in Spleen's most vap'rish hour
Can calm each female breast;
Thee I invoke! Great Genius hear—
Pity a lady's sighs;—
Without thy kind relief be near
Poor COQUETINA dies!

Haste thee, then, and with thee bring
Many a little venom'd sting;
Many a tale that no one knows
Of shall-be-nameless belles and beaux;
Just-imported curtain lectures,
Winks, and nods, and shrewd conjectures;
Half a dozen strange suspicions
Built on stranger suppositions;
Unknown marriages some twenty,
Private child-bed linen plenty;
And horns just fitted to some people's heads,
And certain powder'd coats, and certain tumbled beds!

Teach me, powerful Genius! teach
Thine own mysterious art,
Safe from Retaliation's reach,
How I may throw detraction's dart!

So shall my hand an altar raise
Sacred to thy transcendent praise,
And daily with assiduous care,
Some grateful sacrifice prepare.

The first informations
Of lost reputations
As offerings to thee I'll consign,
And the earliest news
Of surpriz'd billet-doux
Shall constant be serv'd at thy shrine.

Intrigues by the score,
Never heard of before,
Shall the sacrifice daily augment;
And by each Morning Post
Some favourite Toast
A victim to thee shall be sent.

Heav'ns! methinks I see thy train
Softly tripping o'er the plain;
All the alphabet I view
Stepping forward two and two.
Hush! for as they coupled walk,
Sure I hear the letters talk!
Though lowly-fearful whisperings half smother
The well-concerted tales that blab of one another:
"Lord! who'd have thought our cousin *D*
"Could think of marrying Mrs. *E*!
"True, I don't like these things to tell,
"But faith! I pity Mr. *L*;
"And was I he, the bride to vex,
"I'd go and court my Lady *X*.
"Indeed they say that Charlotte *U*,

"With Fanny *M*, and we guess who,
"Occasion'd all—for you must know
"They set their caps at Mr. *O*.
"And as he courted Mrs. *E*,
"They thought if she'd have cousin *D*,
"That things might be, through Captain *A*,
"Just brought about in their own way!"

Oh! how the pleasing style regales my ear—!
Heav'ns! what new forms are these which now appear?

See yonder, in the thickest throng,
Designing Envy sculks along,
Big with malicious Laughter!
Fiction and Cunning swell her train;
While, stretching far behind, in vain
Poor Truth comes panting after.

Now, now indeed, I burn with sacred fires—
'Tis SCANDAL's self that ev'ry thought inspires!
I feel, all-potent Genius! now I feel
Thy working magic through each art'ry steal.

At thy command my fancy warms,
And sweetly paints the alter'd scene—
Her touch now ev'ry grace deforms,
And blackens ev'ry mien!

Each moment to my prying eyes
Some fresh disfigur'd beauties rise:
Each minute I perceive some flaw
That e'en Ill-nature's self ne'er saw.

Hark! some airy whisp'rer hints,
In accents wisely faint,
That bright Cleora rather squints—
Rosetta uses paint—

That though some fops of Celia prate,
  Yet be not her's the praise,
For if she should be passing ſtraight—
  Hem!—she may thank her ſtays!

Each fool of Delia's figure talks,
  And celebrates her fame;
But, for my part, whene'er she walks
  I think she's rather lame.

And mind Ma'am Chloe toss her head!
  Lord! how the creature ſtares!
Well!—I thank God it can't be said
  I give myself those airs.

But ſoft! what figure's this I now see come?
His awful frown ſtrikes even SCANDAL dumb—
Ah me! the blood forſakes my trembling cheek,
While ſternly thus, methinks, I hear him ſpeak:

  Peace, snarling woman, peace!
  'Tis CANDOUR bids thee ceaſe—
CANDOUR—at whoſe inſulted name
Even *thy* face ſhould burn with ſhame!
  Too long I've ſilent ſeen
  The venom of thy ſpleen—
  Too long, with ſecret pain,
  Obſerv'd black SCANDAL's reign;
But now, with indignation ſtung,
  Juſtice demands my tongue,
And bids me drag the lurking fiend to light,
And hold her deeds of darkneſs up to ſight.
Look on this proſpect! and if e'er thy brow
Can feel Compunction's ſick'ning bluſh, 'tis now.

Mark yonder weeping maid,
Sadly deserted laid
Beside that mournful willow!
There ev'ry day, in silent woe,
She bids her tears incessant flow;
And ev'ry night forlornly pining,
Mute on her lilly hand reclining,
Bedews her waking pillow.

Sweet girl! she was once moſt enchantingly gay,
Each youth felt her charms, and acknowledg'd their sway;
No arts did she use to acquire a grace,
'Twas good humour alone that enliven'd her face;
Pure nature had leave in her actions to speak—
The wildness of youth gave the blush to her cheek,
And her looks uninſtructed her thoughts would impart,
Since her eyes only flash'd from the warmth of her heart.
Herself undesigning, no schemes she ſuspected—
Ne'er dreaming of ambush, defence she neglected;
With the youth that she lov'd, at the moon's silver hour,
In confidence tender, she ſtole to the bow'r:
There he hop'd to have all his desires obtain'd,
But she spurn'd at the insult her virtue ſustain'd;
And he, in revenge for his baffled endeavour,
Gave a hint,—'twas enough—she was ruin'd for ever!
A thousand kind females the ſtory augmented—
Each day grinning Envy additions invented;
Till satiated Malice had gain'd all her ends,
Had robb'd her of character—happiness—friends.

And now, sad innocent—alone—
Shunn'd as a peſt she makes her moan,
And in unheard despair,
Yields all resign'd to soul-consuming care.

Yet many a time her wand'ring brain
Turns with its fev'rish weight of pain,
And then a thousand childish things
The pretty mad one rudely sings;
Or mute on the ground she gazes,
And weeps as she scatters her daisies,
And then, in a strain more distractedly loud,
She chants the sad thoughts of her fancy,
And shivers and sings of her cold shrowd—
Ah poor Nancy!

Nay, weep not now!—'tis now too late—
Thy friendship might have stopt her fate;
Rather now hide thy head in conscious shame—
Thy mouth too buzz'd the tale that stain'd her fame.

But come—again— turn here thine eyes,
And view another victim rife—
Observe that crested warrior!—his name
Could make whole hostile ranks disordered fly,
Victory follow'd where the hero came,
And conquest darted from his vengeful eye.
His was true courage on good prudence built—
An arm prepar'd to extirpate or save:
'Twas only rais'd to crush presuming guilt,
Or lend its vigour to the honest brave.

Yet e'en a man thus form'd,
With ev'ery nobler passion warm'd,
At Envy's infamous command,
Fell by dark SCANDAL's secret hand.—
Lothario, dearest of his friends,
Wrong'd him—he scorn'd to ask amends—

In real valour calmness we admire,
'Tis your mock honour that's so soon on fire.
Souls truly great no rash resentments seek—
His friendship pardon'd e'er his rage could speak.
Yet, for a deed that challeng'd brightest fame,
SCANDAL bedamn'd him with a coward's name;
Nay, more secure her vengeance to pursue,
Proclaim'd the man that own'd him coward too.

And see! with proudly sullen air
The injur'd hero stalks alone,
And, though his looks betray his care,
Disdains to vent a single groan:
Save when, by some distracting thought,
To wild impatience madly wrought,
With sudden stamp the ground he beats,
As Mem'ry paints his former feats,
How once knee-deep in blood
Immoveably he stood,
And in the howling battle's roar,
With gaping wounds all cover'd o'er,
His single arm durst firm oppose
A phalanx of assailing foes.
And mark! with starting rage possess'd,
Wildly he bares his furrow'd breast,
And as his scars he views with aching eyes,
"Oh! 'tis too much!" the fault'ring vet'ran cries—
Yet scorning still to let his pangs appear,
Bites hard his quiv'ring lip, and gulps the starting tear!

These are the triumphs SCANDAL claims—
Triumphs deriv'd from ruin'd names—
Such as, to generous minds unknown,
An honest soul would scorn to own.

Nor think, vain woman, while you sneer
At others faults, that you are clear;
No!—turn your back—you undergo
The self-same malice you to others show,
And soon by some malicious tale o'erthrown,
Like these shall fall, unpitied, and unknown!

Oh! then, ye blooming fair attend—
Oh! take kind CANDOUR for your friend,
Nor forfeit, for a mean delight,
That pow'r o'er man that's yours by right.

To woman ev'ry charm was giv'n,
Design'd by all indulgent Heav'n
To soften every care.
Yes! ye were form'd to bless mankind,
To harmonize and soothe the mind,
And guard us from despair.

But when from those sweet lips we hear,
Ill-nature's whisper, Envy's sneer,
Your pow'r that moment dies.
Each coxcomb makes your name his sport,
And fools when angry will retort
What men of sense despise.

Leave, then, such low pursuits as these,
And take a nobler road to please—
Let CANDOUR guide your way—
So shall you daily conquests gain,
And captives glorying in your chain,
Be proud to own your sway.

THE END

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